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Assāda Samaṇa,brāhmaṇa Sutta

The Discourse on Gratification, Recluses and Brahmins | A 3.102/1:260

Theme: Escape from the world and suffering is possible

Translated by Piya Tan ©2005

1 Sutta highlights

1.1 TWO SUTTAS IN ONE? All the traditional Tipiṭakas of Sri Lanka and SE Asia, except for the Pali Text Society (PTS) edition, list two discreet texts here: **the Dutīya Assāda Sutta** and **the Samāṇa Brāhmaṇa Sutta**. The PTS edition, however, combined the two texts into a single sutta, without giving the combined text any name.

The reason for the PTS edition combining the two texts is clearly because the materials are closely connected. In fact, both these texts are also connected with another “split” sutta, that is, **the Pubb’eva Sambodha Sutta** (A 3.101a = SD 14.6a) and **the Paṭhama Assāda Sutta** (A 3.101b = SD 14.6b). All the four suttas form a coherent sequence, and may be studied together as such. In summary, here are the four suttas in their proper set sequence:

Pubb’eva Sambodha Sutta	“Just Before the Self-awakening” Discourse	A 3.101a/1:258 f	SD 14.6a
Paṭhama Assāda Sutta	The Discourse on Gratification 1	A 3.101b/1:259	SD 14.6b
Dutīya Assāda Sutta	The Discourse on Gratification 2	A 3.102a/1:260	SD 14.7a
Samāṇa Brāhmaṇa Sutta	The Discourse on Recluses and Brahmins	A 3.102b/1:260	SD 14.7b

1.2 RELATED SUTTAS. The Dutīya Assāda Sutta, which starts abruptly, is clearly a continuation of **the Pubba Sambodha Sutta** (A 3.101);¹ hence, it is sometimes called **the Pubba Sambodha Sutta 2**. Both suttas deal with the same topic, that of the set of three terms—*assāda*, *ādīnava* and *nissaraṇa*.² However, while the Pubba Sambodha Sutta deals with the negative aspect, that is, the arising of suffering, the Dutīya Assāda Sutta speaks of the possibility of escape from such suffering. In both the suttas, it is clear that the Buddha has discovered this escape from suffering.

The Commentary to **the Cūḷa Sīha,nāda Sutta** (M 11.7/1:65) says the arising (*samudaya*) of the views of being (*bhava,diṭṭhi*) and non-being (*vibhava,diṭṭhi*) are due to any of these eight conditions (*attha-ṭ,ṭhāna*): the five aggregates, ignorance, contact, perception, thought, unskilful consideration, evil friends, and the voice of another.³ The passing away (*atthaṅgama*) of wrong views, by way of conditions (*paccaya*), is the path of stream-entry which removes wrong views. Both these arising and disappearance may also be momentary (*khaṇika*). Their gratification (*assāda*) may be understood as the satisfaction of the psychological need that they impose on one; their danger (*ādīnava*) is the continual bondage that they entail; the escape (*nissaraṇa*) from them is nirvana (MA 2:11).

See also **the Cha,chakka Sutta** (M 148) where the latent tendencies are explained in connection with each of the 6 senses.⁴

2 The key tenses

What is interesting in the Dutīya Assāda Sutta is the use of the different Pali verbs and tenses for the two different groups of people mentioned here: *sattā lokassa* (the world’s beings) and *samaṇā vā brāhmaṇā vā lokassa* (the world’s recluses and brahmins). In §2 the world’s beings who did not have any direct knowledge (*na abbhaññāsum*) of *assāda*, *ādīnava* and *nissaraṇa* are described in the *past tense*: “they dwelled (*viharimsu*) with a mind that is not free....” The word *abbhaññāsum* (“they do not directly

¹ A 3.101/1:258 f = SD 14.6.

² See **Assāda Sambodha S** (A 3.101/1:258 f) = SD 14.6 (2) for details.

³ Pm 1:138.

⁴ M 148.28-39/3:285-287 = SD 26.6.

know”) is the past tense 3rd person plural of *abhi-jānāti* (“he directly knows”), the noun of which is *abhiññā*.

In the case of those beings (in the same paragraph) who *had* direct knowledge (that is, personal experience) (*abbhaññāsum*) of these three states, “they dwell (*viharanti*) with a mind that is free....” Here, however, the present tense 3rd person plural (*viharanti*, “they dwell”) is used.

Then, in the following §3, the world’s recluses and brahmins who lack understanding (*nāppajānanti*) of the three states “ do not dwell (*na...viharanti*) accomplished...” Both negative verbs are in the present tense. And finally, in the case of the world’s recluses and brahmins who understand (*pajānanti*) these three states, they will dwell (*viharissanti*) accomplished in their goal. The first verb is in the present tense, and the second (spiritual accomplishment) is in the future tense.

In canonical Pali, the past tense (aorist) is not always as well demarcated in time as in modern English. The Pali aorist is used for all kinds of past actions: the historical or narrative past (especially the present perfect, *desesim*, “I have taught”). As Warder notes, when more precise demarcations of time relations are needed, participles are used in conjunction with the main verb.⁵ However, from the Sutta context, it is clear that the Buddha is referring to the nature of spiritual development before the Teaching (only past tense), and when the Teaching is available (all three tenses).

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Dutiya Assāda Sutta

The Second Discourse on Gratification | A 3.102a/1:260

A 3.3.1.3 Aṅguttara Nikāya 3, Tika Nipāta 3, Tatiya Paṇṇāsaka 1, Sambodha Vagga 3

Theme: Escape from suffering is possible

1 Bhikshus, if there were *no gratification* in the world, beings would not be attached to this world. But, bhikshus, as there *is* gratification in the world, beings are attached to this world.

Bhikshus, if there were *no danger* in the world, beings would not be revulsed⁶ by this world. But, bhikshus, as there *is* danger in the world, beings are revulsed at this world.

Bhikshus, if there were *no escape* from the world, beings could not escape from this world. But, bhikshus, as there *is* an escape from the world, beings can escape from this world.

2 (1) BEINGS IN THIS WORLD. Now, bhikshus, so long as the beings have not directly known the world as it really is,

its gratification as gratification,

its danger as danger,

the escape (from it) as escape,

to that extent, bhikshus, they dwell with a mind that is *not free* from it, not detached from it, not released from it,

confined to this world with its devas, Māra and Brahmā, in this generation with its ascetics and brahmins, its devas and humans.

⁵ See AK Warder, *Introduction to Pali*, London, 2nd ed 1974:26 & 235-239.

⁶ OED (2nd ed) has only this def: “(transitive) To drag, draw, or pull back; to tear away,” and records its earliest usages as follows: **1669**, W Simpson, *Hydrologia Chymica* 78: “This virulent acrimony...becomes by a retrograde motion revulsed into the veins.” **1673**, William Harvey, *Anatomical Exercises concerning the motion of the heart and blood* ii 123: “To take away the blood...that it might be revulsed from the lungs.” The more common forms of this word are the n “revulsion” and the adj “revulsive.” The Merriam-Webster 3rd New International Dictionary however has “revulsed,” which it defines as “affected with or having undergone revulsion.” Since the context here is very clear, it is helpful to revive this dying word.

3 But, bhikshus, so long as the world's beings have directly known **the world** as it really is, its gratification as gratification, its danger as danger, the escape (from it) as escape, to that extent, bhikshus, they dwell with a mind that is *free* from it, detached from it, released from it, *not* confined to this world with its devas, Māra and Brahmā, in this generation with its ascetics and brahmins, its devas and humans.

7b

Samāṇa,brāhmaṇa Sutta

The Discourse on Recluses and Brahmins | A 3.102b/1:260

A 3.3.1.4 Aṅguttara Nikāya 3, Tika Nipāta 3, Tatiya Paṇṇāsaka 1, Sambodha Vagga 4

Theme: Escape from the world is possible

4 (2) RECLUSES AND BRAHMINS IN THE WORLD. Bhikshus, those recluses and brahmins who have not understood **the world** as it really is, its gratification as gratification, its danger as danger, the escape (from it) as escape, those recluses, bhikshus, are *not* regarded as recluses, these brahmins are *not* regarded as brahmins, by me.

And these venerable ones do not dwell accomplished in the goal of recluseship or the goal of brahminhood, having realized it through direct knowledge, here and now, for themselves.

5 But, bhikshus, those recluses and brahmins who have understood **the world** as it really is, its gratification as gratification, its danger as danger, the escape (from it) as escape, those recluses, bhikshus, *are* regarded as recluses, those brahmins *are* regarded as brahmins, by me. And these venerable ones indeed dwell accomplished in the goal of recluseship or the goal of brahminhood, having realized it through direct knowledge, here and now, for themselves.

— evaṃ —

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